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123, 133, 268, 289, 351. The index to future volumes would be even more useful, first if more complete, at least under headings indicating constitutional processes, *e. g.*—*receptor*, 27, 132 (whose election is incorrectly assigned by Kampschulte to *consilium generale*), *electiones sindicorum* (ten out of sixteen omitted); second, if items were grouped logically rather than etymologically, *e. g.*—all proclamations should be found together under *cridæ* (cries) and not, as now, eight of them under *crida ville* (crieur) simply because *crida* occurs in the singular; and the election of syndics, pp. 69, 132, 135, 138, should not be omitted but entered under *electiones sindicorum*, though the form may be verbal, *electi*, or *fiat sindicus*.

Such a painstaking and generous publication is a genuine contribution to scholarship. The first official records of the growth of Genevean institutions possess far more than local interest, and the continuation of their publication, already undertaken by the society, will be eagerly awaited.

HERBERT D. FOSTER.

The Epistles of Erasmus from his Earliest Letters to his Fifty-first Year, arranged in order of time. English translation by FRANCIS MORGAN NICHOLS. (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1901. Pp. xciii, 39, 496.)

AN event of no little interest to English students of the Renaissance is the appearance, for the first time, of a translation of the letters of Erasmus. Mr. Francis Morgan Nichols, the translator, has moreover done much more than merely to translate. He has undertaken to arrange the correspondence down to the year 1517 in a reasonable chronological order and to state at considerable length the reasons for his arrangement. The sequence of the letters is shown in a chronological register, and the explanations are given in a running commentary which is to be found partly at the beginning of the several chapters and partly in connection with each letter as it occurs. The present volume covers the period to 1509; a second volume extending to 1517 is to be expected.

Mr. Nichols's qualifications for his work are many and sound. He knows the Erasmian Latin with a knowledge other than that of the mere classicist. He seldom fails to get the right word or phrase to express the not always perfectly obvious meaning of the great stylist. His own style is easy and occasionally goes far to suggest the actual mood of one of the moodiest of men. So far as their general interest is concerned, the letters here given are perhaps the least attractive in Erasmus's whole correspondence. They begin with two groups probably written during and immediately after his residence in the monastery at Steyn; letters so obviously conventional in subject and tone that Mr. Nichols is probably right in his conjecture that they are little more than rhetorical exercises. They introduce us to the narrow circle of Erasmus's first literary sympathizers, with whom he kept in touch only so long as he needed them. His departure from the monastery, and the failure of his first attempts to

get his living from a patron led him into correspondence with various possible Mæcenases of whom we get glimpses especially in the letters to Battus and his first English friends at Paris. Gradually the capacities, the ambitions and the dominant passions of the man began to reveal themselves. We have in the first eight chapters of Mr. Nichols's collection about one hundred letters bringing the correspondence down to 1500 and including the first visit to England, probably in 1499. So far Erasmus had published practically nothing. He was nearly thirty-five years of age when he leaped at once into fame by his collection of *Adagia* published at Paris in 1500. This direct service to sound learning gave an immediate widening to his horizon and this is reflected in his correspondence. His increasing seriousness of purpose recommended him slowly to the attention of more and more persons, and he seldom had dealings with any one without leaving some epistolary trace. Mr. Nichols's arrangement brings out this development very clearly.

As to the chronology we may well doubt if any more conscientious or capable analysis is ever likely to be applied to this problem than may be found here. Certainly none ever has been. And yet it is pretty much all guess-work. The uncertainty is inherent in the nature of the case. Erasmus either cared nothing for chronology, or was quite willing to cover up the traces of many not altogether savory episodes in his early life by deliberately dropping or changing dates. He had no fixed system of dating, nor can we ever be sure that he changed his method to conform to the practice of the country in which he happened to be. His editors have been as indifferent as himself; so that the modern student is practically reduced to the text of the letters themselves for his points of attachment. Mr. Nichols has frankly accepted this situation and has done his best to interpret his text with reference to every allusion that could suggest a fixed point of time. In all this early period such allusions are rare; the case of the anniversary of a striking event, fixing Erasmus's departure from England is a great exception, and even here we have to change a date by a full year and accept a day and month on doubtful authority. Even all Erasmus's attempts to date events—generally rather roughly—by reference to his own age are of uncertain value since we are not sure of the year of his birth and have grave reasons to doubt whether he knew it himself.

It would therefore be too much to say that Mr. Nichols has settled, once for all, the vexed question of the Erasmian chronology, nor would he be in the least inclined to make so large a claim. What he has done is to offer a series of reasonably consistent arguments for a sequence which presents no gross violations of probability. He has brought to bear upon his task a great deal of learning and not a little information that may fairly be called in this connection "original." His work is likely to serve as at least a safe starting-point for future students in this unlimited field.